

**Board of Forestry and Fire Protection
Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)**

**Minutes
January 11, 2007**

Attending:

RMAC:

Representing

Ken Zimmerman	California Cattlemen's Association
Mike Connor	Public Member
Clancy Dutra	California Farm Bureau Federation
J.R. McCollister	Public Member
Neil McDougald	California Cattlemen's Association
Chuck Pritchard	California Assoc. of Resource Conservation Districts
Jeff Stephens	CAL FIRE / RMAC Executive Secretary

Members of the Public:

Steve Schoenig	Department of Food & Agriculture
Tracy Schohr	California Cattlemen's Association

Items 1 & 2 Call to Order and Introductions:

Ken Zimmerman called the meeting to order at 8:00 A.M. Introductions of all present were made.

Item 3, Review of the December 6, 2006 minutes:

Corrections were noted by Jeff Stephens. Mike Connor moved for approval with corrections. Clancy Dutra seconded. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Item 4, California Working Lands Stewardship Advisory Council

Item tabled until further notice.

Item 5, Agency and Association Reports:

California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA); Steve Schoenig Reporting:

Ken Zimmerman asked Steve Schoenig with CDFA to provide an explanation of the State Board of Agriculture. Mr. Schoenig explained that the Board is composed of prominent agricultural leaders; commodities, University of California, and the public are represented. He confirmed for Ken Zimmerman that the Ag Board functions differently than the Board of Forestry in that it does not adopt regulation; more along the lines of identifying primary issues of concern. They have taken up the subject of invasive plant species on a few occasions. They meet quarterly or possibly every two months. A number of recent Ag Secretaries are former Board Chairmen to this body. Steve

Schoenig volunteered to suggest to the Ag Board that RMAC make a presentation to this group to better inform them of rangeland issues.

Steve Schoenig mentioned that the California Rangeland Resolution (CRR) has just come to his attention. He was not able to attend the most recent annual meeting of the California Rangeland Coalition (CRC) but noted that the resolution has no mention of invasive species on rangelands. He considers invasive weeds as the prime secondary threat compared to development for degradation of rangeland.

Steve Schoenig mentioned the Grazing Land Coalition Initiative (GLCI) contribution of \$44 million for weed control on grazing lands. They are looking at the State Parks model of putting together strike teams of young people working under the supervision of a California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) Biologist. This constitutes \$330,000 for 4 years. If successful he plans to approach Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and use Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) money for the same purpose. Ken Zimmerman asked how this would relate to the Weed Management Areas (WMAs). Mr. Schoenig stated that based on a request he made the WMAs identified sites where the program would be beneficial. Chuck Pritchard suggested that Steve Schoenig speak with the California Conservation Corps (CCC). They have done mechanical work for the control of invasive weeds. Steve Schoenig stated that his branch Chief has made contact and they had a number of pilot projects last year with CCC. Herbicides have not been used due to human health fears.

Chuck Pritchard confirmed for the meeting that EQIP has had a similar program that started about 2 years ago out of a need to control juniper. It has since been expanded to other species and uses.

Steve Schoenig mentioned another grant that he applies for every year with the US Forest Service (USFS). This grant is for \$300,000 for weed control on non-federal ground that is near or adjacent to a US Forest.

Chuck Pritchard noted that CalTrans is not spending funds on yellow star thistle for the future. Steve Schoenig suggested that RMAC invite Linda Hamel, vegetation management coordinator with CalTrans. He stated that CalTrans is caught in the dilemma of not controlling invasive weeds on sites where some form of plant cover is needed to control erosion. Their current policy is to focus on a specific species in an area with a recommendation from the Ag Commissioner for treatment. They also have a "Good Neighbor Policy" where CalTrans will initiate control on the right of way when done in cooperation with an adjacent landowner also seeking to control an invasive species. He mentioned Sherry Edwards and Linda Hamel as important people to communicate with on invasive species and the CalTrans' weed program.

Mike Connor stated that CalTrans needs to do management that includes a no-spray option, since in some cases herbicide treatments encourage summer weeds and erosion.

Ken Zimmerman asked for the funding status of the WMAs. Steve Schoenig stated that the legislature inserted \$2.5 million into the CDFA budget last year, but unfortunately the governor vetoed \$1 million. This left \$1.5 million available for year one. \$1.2 million is going for projects at the WMA level. These projects target rangelands for eradication type projects, and projects for preserving biodiversity by protecting endangered species. \$150,000 is for research on why not all treated plants die.

Steve Schoenig confirmed that the Oversight Committee for the WMA funding created by 1740 does exist. CCA is represented on the committee.

California Cattlemen's Association (CCA); Tracy Schohr Reporting:

Tracy Schohr brought up the CRR stating that CDF just become signatory to the resolution and that coalition members have met with CAL FIRE Crawford Tuttle and Mike Chrisman Secretary for the Resources Agency. Tracy Schohr indicated a willingness to work towards recognition of the weed management problem as part of the CRR, and that action items generated at the annual CRC meeting did encompass control of noxious weeds.

Attendance at the annual meeting of the CRC nearly doubled compared to the previous year. Ken Zimmerman expressed encouragement that the annual meeting included considerable comment on stewardship. Tracy Schohr stated that a large contingent from the ranching community attended. She stressed the importance of the CRC in that now many of the CCA goals that are circulated to legislators in Washington DC will now be circulated jointly with other groups such as Defenders of Wildlife and the Nature Conservancy. Ed Burton with NRCS announced a new wildlife initiative for \$1 million. There was also an announcement of new money coming on line for conservation easements through Prop 84. Steve Thompson with USFWS spoke reporting that the CRC is getting recognition in Washington DC as a group with common goals. One CRC major goal this year is to seek endorsement for the CRR from the California Legislature.

Ken Zimmerman found it significant that the summit was hosted by the USFWS. Tracy Schohr reported that her position is 60% funded by the USFWS.

Next year the CRC Summit will be patterned after the Quivera (sp) Conference, a similar organization in the southwestern US. This will include more focus on research and partnerships. Chuck Pritchard reported that Quivera (sp) started very small with limited success and grew to a larger and more effective group that utilizes ranch tours to illustrate management practices. He recommended this approach for the CRC. This closed discussion from CCA.

Item 6, Focus Group Reports:

Policy Focus Group; Ken Zimmerman Reporting:

Ken Zimmerman reported that a group of RMAC members will be providing additional comment on the paper for integrating resource management with investments. In addition he expects to obtain a copy of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Management Plan in hopes of obtaining some useful text from this document. Ken Zimmerman noted that Neil McDougald will be writing a cover letter that introduces the paper.

Mr. Zimmerman stated the paper needs more examples of good management scenarios. He specifically invited the CRC to review the paper and make comment. Tracy Schohr suggested sending the draft paper to Michelle Clark with the Rangeland Trust since they are interested in using easements to stimulate responsible management. Ms. Schohr stated that she will send other recommended CRC contacts to review the draft paper. Ed Pandofino (sp) with Audubon Society was suggested.

Jeff Stephens will circulate the latest copy of the paper with a revision agreed upon at the Policy Focus Group meeting that makes a transition between the text on WMA development and cooperative forms of land management such as the Yolo Bypass example. Ken Zimmerman indicated that he wants all comment back by March 1, 2007. Jeff Stephens will circulate another revised copy the week prior to the March meeting.

Rangeland Focus Group: Mike Connor Reporting:

Mike Connor stated that the Rangeland Focus group met the previous day and took considerable comment from James Bartolome, Professor University of California. Mr. Connor reported on the Integrated Hardwood Range Management Program and the IHRMP Strategic Plan. He noted that the IHRMP Goals such as promoting healthy and sustainable woodland ecosystems are in sync with the goals of RMAC.

Jim Bartolome is also Secretary for the Certification Range Manager (CRM) Certification Panel. During the Focus group meeting Dr. Bartolome provided a summary of how the current situation with CRM certification and the area of CRM responsibilities were arrived at. The definition of a "forested landscape" (10% tree canopy) was reviewed by RMAC. Any enforcement of the CRM depends on the definition of a forested landscape which is a potential topic of discussion at the next Professional Foresters Examining Committee (PFEC) meeting. Mike Connor stated that the Board's Licensing Office must investigate claims, administer tests, and will in the future pay for the writing and grading of tests for the CRM Program.

Mike Connor indicated that a more rapid grading and processing of tests was discussed. The need for a more rapid response was made known to Dr. Bartolome.

Continuing Education Units were also discussed the day prior. Mike Connor indicated that Dr. Bartolome is willing to carry forward RMAC suggestions to the CRM Certification Panel that incorporate financial incentives for CEU participation by way of fee reductions.

Mike Connor asked if there were any actions that RMAC requested of him in regards to the CRM Program. Neil McDougald stated that the recommendation to the CRM Certification Panel be one of developing a sophisticated and documented CEU program for range managers along with providing classes that meet certification standards. He further recommended that it be patterned after the national SRM model. This would be 24 course hours per year. The license fee could be used for maintaining the data base on CEU hours.

Ken Zimmerman raised the issue of how to classify range lands as meeting the forested landscape definition (10% tree canopy) when in fact the property has portions that are void of tree canopy. The issue was identified as a problem of interpretation on the ground. Mike Connor noted that in all likelihood a property may be subdivided into land that qualifies and land which does not qualify under the 10% guideline. Neil McDougald emphasized that the real purpose for certification should be protection of the citizens, providing some measure of assurance that a person is qualified to perform range management tasks regardless of tree canopy.

Mike Connor stated that he will carry forward to the CRM Certification Panel the RMAC recommendations for CEU credits. This includes course availability. Concern was

expressed on the cost of courses if done through universities. Tracy Schohr recommended that the courses be offered through community colleges in order to keep the cost down. Neil McDougald asked that Mike Connor also carry forward that courses should be economically feasible for the students. Mr. Connor agreed.

Chuck Pritchard stated that the questions posed to Jim Bartolome regarding the timeliness of receiving test results and responses to the applicant should be raised once again with the CRM Certification Panel. Mike Connor agreed. Clancy Dutra restated his assertion that a letter to the applicant explaining the timelines for the testing and grading process should be standard practice. This places the student and those administering the process on notice of what is expected for administering and grading tests.

Neil McDougald noted that within the specialist ranks of the IHRMP Strategic Plan there was missing any mention of a rangeland specialty. Mr. McDougald agreed to write a letter to IHRMP expressing this concern for signature by Ken Zimmerman.

Mike Connor stated that the next meeting of the CRM Panel is February 12th at 2:00 PM, location to be announced. He will carry forward RMAC recommendations at that meeting.

Mike Connor turned attention to the next Rangeland Focus Group meeting and asked Jeff Stephens to invite Linda Hamel. Potential topics would include weed control, erosion, CRM requirements on CalTrans projects, CalTrans Good Neighbor Program, land owners doing treatments on road right of way (permits), and biological agents.

Mike Connor also mentioned a USFS Range Conservationist that would like to use more grazing but is not getting internal support. As a result grazing permits are being reduced or lost. He agreed to contact Lisa Osterholm for the next RMAC meeting to explore this issue.

Vegetation Management/Fire Focus Group; JR McCollister Reporting:

J.R. McCollister provided a summary of the Focus group meeting of the previous day. He began by discussing the Fire Plan and RMAC's effort for securing a position on the Fire Plan Update Advisory Committee. He explained that the Committee has been disbanded and there are no immediate plans to reconvene. He clarified that RMAC represented groups will need to appear at the RPC meetings in order to have input into the planning process. Currently they are reviewing the Level of Service. J.R. McCollister will attempt to determine appropriate timing for stakeholders to appear at the RPC.

Mr. McCollister stated that the key issues before the stakeholders deal with how range improvement is dealt with in the Plan. Currently the emphasis is on the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas that are not conducive to range improvement projects. Tracy Schohr asked if the Committees summary is available. Jeff Stephens confirmed that it is a public document distributed via the RPC.

J.R. McCollister then discussed the VTP Review and the Working Group that has been formed by the RPC to examine all CAL FIRE vegetation treatment programs. The results of the working group would produce a "baseline" of all programs that would be available to any interested stakeholders for comment. Russ Henly, Chris Zimny, Jeff

Stephens and other CAL FIRE staff are assigned to this working group. Work on this project has not been proceeding in a significant manner. J.R. McCollister distributed a spreadsheet that is the product of the RPC which identified the different pieces of information that the working group was asked to gather on each program. Jeff Stephens stated that he would provide a description of the various fields found within the spreadsheet. Comments on the spreadsheet components from RMAC are due back by the March RMAC meeting.

J.R. McCollister then briefly mentioned review of the Vegetation Treatment Program EIR. This topic received considerable discussion at the Focus Group meeting one day prior to the Full RMAC meeting. Review by RMAC is being conducted by J.R. McCollister and Mike Connor.

Ken Zimmerman asked if Jeff Stephens had anything further to add on vegetation treatment programs in general. He responded stating that CAL FIRE has just initiated a \$2,000,000 contract with the Sierra Nevada Coordinated Resource Management Council to deliver CFIP type funding to private landowners. This action was taken in order to comply with an Attorney General opinion stating that it was not appropriate for the Department to contract directly with private landowners for the delivery of Proposition 40 funds due to the language contained within the enabling legislation. There is another \$3,000,000 targeted at Community Assistance Grants where the Department has authority to contract directly with non-profit organizations and other government agencies.

Conversation returned to the VTP EIR review. RMAC expressed frustration with the Board's present methodology of reviewing the documents using only two RMAC members for this purpose. Jeff Stephens agreed to carry forward RMAC's concerns to CAL FIRE management and ask for total RMAC participation in the review. Clancy Dutra stated that a workable alternative is for the two responsible RMAC members to prepare a report of findings on documents prior to the RMAC meetings, so that meaningful discussion may occur.

Item 7, New and Unfinished Business:

Ken Zimmerman asked for input from the Focus Group Chairmen if they planned to have a meeting in March. J.R. McCollister responded possibly depending on discussion items. Mike Connor stated he intends to have a meeting.

Chuck Pritchard stated that a GLCI meeting will occur March 21st in the afternoon. Tracy Curry will send an agenda. Tracy Schohr announced the CCA annual breakfast will occur March 20th. RSVP is required.

Item 8, Public Comment:

NONE

Adjourn